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PSYCHOLOGY AND SCIENTIFIC METHODS

SOME DIFFICULTIES IN JAMES'S FORMULATION OF PRAGMATISM¹

WITH the growing importance of pragmatism in the philosophical arena, there arises a corresponding need for a clear understanding of it. One of the most significant attempts at self-definition on the part of the pragmatists is the volume called, suggestively, *Creative Intelligence*. Its title calls attention to the pivotal position of the definition of consciousness in this philosophy, and emphasizes at the same time its functional nature.

There is another, and a very important, approach which may and should be made to pragmatism, and that is an approach through the philosophy of William James. In studying the relationship between James and pragmatism, there is need for careful analysis in order to discover wherein pragmatism has advanced beyond James's formulation of it.²

It is my hope to show this advance in regard to the central problem of consciousness, and for this purpose I shall discuss the suggestiveness of James's use of the *fringe*; his inability, however, to escape entirely from dualism, which asserted itself in the latter essays as well as in the *Principles of Psychology*; the confusion between truth and reality which invalidated his two tests, whereby objects are distinguished from thoughts; and finally his return to sensationalism in the guise of "pure experience." How present-day pragmatism escapes these pitfalls of dualism by the insistence upon consciousness as functional is the opposite side of the picture and the moral of the tale.

As early as 1890 James suggested in his doctrine of the fringe the germinal idea that there is in conscious experience some element

¹ This study was undertaken at the University of Illinois under the direction of Professor B. H. Bode.

² One commonly hears it said that the name pragmatism is outworn and that functionalism, behaviorism, instrumentalism or possibly Deweyism, are more adequate terms. I feel, however, that historically, for in its short existence it has made history, there is much to be said in favor of the word pragmatism.

of indeterminateness, some need for reconstruction of the given data—the very aspect of consciousness which the authors of *Creative Intelligence* find supremely significant.

The pages of the *Psychology* in which James discussed the nature of the fringe are too familiar to call for direct quotation.³ It will be remembered that James spoke of the fringe as “part of the object cognized.” That object might itself be a problem, a gap, and the fringe might be relations of “unarticulated affinities.” The most important characteristic of the fringe is, he repeated, “the mere feeling of harmony or discord, of a right or wrong direction in the thought.”⁴ This conception of harmony as implying growth or progressive development of the object of thought in a certain direction was a revolutionary idea for 1890.⁵ In 1918 it still needs to be explained.

In James's later thought, the fringe as harmony or discord of direction was translated into the phrase “continuity of experience,” and in this connection reached the highest development James ever gave to it. Nowhere did James state the truly functional nature of relationships so clearly and so unambiguously as in his reply to Mr. Bode's criticism of his doctrine on the ground that it implied a necessary transcendence of experience.⁶ In reply to his critic, James said that the objective reference contained in such a relationship as *and* does not transcend experience, because we actually find the future within the present experience. James's own words were: “Radical empiricism alone insists upon understanding forwards also, and refuses to substitute static concepts of the understanding for transitions in our moving life. A logic similar to that which my critic seems to employ here should, it seems to me, forbid him to say that our present is, while present, directed to our future, or that any physical movement can have direction until its goal is actually reached.”⁷

One can understand how James's reiteration that “we are expectant of a ‘more’ to come, and before the ‘more’ has come, the transition nevertheless is directed towards it,”⁸ may appear to a reader an obvious misuse of objective reference, and so indeed it would be, were it not that James had insisted in this connection that

³ Cf. *Principles of Psychology*, Vol. I., p. 258 *et seq.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 261.

⁵ The fringe, we must not forget, had a static as well as dynamic aspect for James. It was a “halo” as well as a “tendency.”

⁶ Cf. B. H. Bode, *Pure Experience and the External World*, this JOURNAL, Vol. II., p. 128, and James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, pp. 234–240.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 238–239.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 237.

it is a fact of experience that the future is found within the present. Here James is one with the pragmatists of to-day whose work may be regarded primarily as expository of the fact which James here affirms.

That James did not always explain objective reference thus satisfactorily will be considered in the course of this review. We shall find that he did what he criticized rationalists for doing: he treated experience as chopped into discontinuous static objects, because he dropped the future reference out of the present. The force of his training in dualistic modes of thinking was too strong even for his genius, and he therefore failed to be wholly consistent with his own advanced position.

This brings us to a consideration of the position which James called a "modified dualism." It was for James only another way of describing the object with its fringe of relationships and the important truth which he meant to emphasize by it was not that two realities of different orders of existence face each other in experience, but that reality may function in two ways, now as thought and now as thing. By good right is James high in the esteem of pragmatists, for thus freshly and vigorously envisaging the problem.

This modified dualism, which is the theme of many of the *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, marked a distinct advance beyond the position taken in his *Principles of Psychology* in regard to the "Stream of Thought," for he no longer held that thoughts and things belonged to different orders of existence, but said instead that they are the selfsame piece of experience taken twice over in different contexts, now as thought and now as thing.⁹ In his own words we find: "My thesis is that if we start with the supposition that there is only one primal stuff or material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff 'pure experience' then knowing can easily be explained as a particular sort of relation into which parts of experience may enter. The relation itself is a part of experience; one of its 'terms' becomes the subject or bearer of the knowledge, the knower, the other becomes the object known." Further quotations will serve to make his meaning clear. He wrote: "The one self-identical thing has so many relations to the rest of experience that you can take it in disparate systems of association,

⁹ *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 4. It is disconcerting to find that James added a footnote at this point to this effect: "In my *Psychology* I have tried to show that we need no knower other than the passing thought." This would seem to indicate that he felt a fundamental agreement between the two views and that the twenty years of doubting the existence of consciousness as an entity, of which he spoke at the beginning of the essay, had not made him wholly dissatisfied with his earlier dualism.

and treat it as belonging with opposite contexts. In one of these contexts it is your field of consciousness; in another it is 'the room in which you sit,' and it enters both contexts in its wholeness, giving no pretexts for being said to attach itself to consciousness by one of its parts or aspects and to outer reality by another. . . . The physical and the mental operations form curiously incompatible groups. As a room, the experience has occupied that spot and had that environment for thirty years. As your field of consciousness it may never have existed until now. . . . In the real world fire will consume it. In your mind, you can let fire play over it without effect. As an outer object you must pay so much a month to inhabit it. As an inner content you occupy it for any length of time rent free. If in short you follow it in the mental direction, taking it along with events of personal biography solely, all sorts of things are true of it which are false, and false of it which are true, if you treat it as a real thing experienced, follow it in the physical direction and relate it to associates in the outer world.'"¹⁰

Once having said that thoughts and things are not different forms of existence, James was bound to make the further explanation of how, then, they manage to separate sharply into the two contexts, the thought, or personal biography context, and the thing context, formed of purely physical, and non-biographical relations. We do speak of thoughts and we do speak of things, and how do we make the distinction?

We know his answer, namely that the distinction between a thought and a thing is a dualism based upon function. Unfortunately the precise nature of this functionalism escaped him, and the consequences of this failure were momentous.

James offered two apparently unrelated explanations of the method by which we distinguish between thoughts and things. The first and simplest test rests upon the relative stability of relationships and might suffer translation into the phraseology of the *Psychology* as harmony or lack of harmony of the fringe. Thus according to the test of stability we are able to distinguish between a real room and a thought of a room, because the real room has stable relationships, whereas the idea of the room has not. The second functional test, upon which James placed much emphasis, is that the idea leads us toward reality: the idea of the room, for instance, enables us to reach the room. Here we see the feeling of direction, so characteristic of the fringe, now fully developed into actual guidance, as expressed in terms of behavior. Let us examine each of these tests in turn.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-15.

When we examine the first we find much plausibility in it. Every one will admit that real knives will cut real sticks, and will admit no less readily that a little boy's most vivid thought of a knife has never yet cut a willow whistle. In the boy's dreams the knife may or may not fashion the coveted whistle, but in the world of things a certain knife applied in a certain way produces a definitely calculable result. It was this certainty of result which led James to speak of "the stubborn, cohesive, and permanent relationships"¹¹ which constitute the context of what we know as things. This stability inevitably comes to be contrasted with the unstable relationships, fleeting as dreams, which constitute the context of what we know as thoughts. Thus James said, once more using the room as an example: "The room thought-of, namely, has many thought-of couplings with many thought-of things. Some of these couplings are inconstant, others are stable. In the reader's personal history the room occupies a single date—he saw it only once perhaps, a year ago. Of the house's history, on the other hand, it forms a permanent ingredient. Some of the couplings have the curious stubbornness, to borrow Royce's term, of fact, others show the fluidity of fancy, we let them come and go as we please. . . . The two collections, first of its cohesive and second of its loose associates, inevitably come to be contrasted. We call the first collection the system of external relations, in the midst of which the room as real exists, the other we call the stream of our internal thinking, in which as a mental image it for a moment floats."¹²

James realized, as others had not, T. H. Green, for example, who considered unalterableness the test of reality,¹³ that to name the relationships of things coherent, stable, or unalterable, in distinction to the relationships of thoughts, was merely to state the problem. The terms unalterableness and stability needed explanation themselves, and as James saw, this explanation could be given only in functional terms. Accordingly he translated stability of relationship into its equivalent in terms of behavior, saying that we sift out the "real" from the "mental" objects because with real objects "*Consequences always accrue.*"¹⁴ As many critics of pragmatism have followed James in believing that this is indeed the real meaning of functionalism, it will be well for us to understand what James meant when he said that when we deal with real objects "*consequences always accrue.*" Taking a pen as an example of the application of the functional criterion, he writes: "To get classed either

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 22 ff.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

¹³ Cf. T. H. Green, *Prolegomena: The Spiritual Principle in Nature*, p. 24.

¹⁴ *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, p. 33.

as a physical pen or as some one's percept of a pen, it must assume a *function*, and that can only happen in a more complicated world. So far as in that world it is a stable feature, holds ink, marks paper and obeys the guidance of a hand, it is a physical pen. That is what we mean by being physical in a pen. So far as it is instable, on the contrary, coming and going with the movements of my eyes, altering with what I call my fancy, continuous with subsequent experience of its 'having been' (in the past tense), it is the percept of a pen in my mind. These peculiarities are what we mean by being conscious."¹⁵

The example is apparently definite enough and simple enough, yet one soon finds that its meaning is far from clear. One explanation of the example may be that James considered the stable relationships constitutive of reality as existing between objects independent of experience, objects which form the subject-matter of the physical sciences for instance, but which, as soon as brought into relationship with an experiencing organism, become mental existences. If this is a true interpretation, the significance of the functional test is gone and a dualism unmodified and dangerous nullifies James's effort to advance. For if stable relationships can exist only outside of experience, James, no less than the idealist or the realist, should ascribe thinghood in an absolutistic sense to a world independent of experience. Indeed, the logical result of this interpretation of his definition of reality would be to deny that reality ever enters into experience, for it would mean a reinstatement of the belief in the duality of the real and the apparent, in such sense that the real would be an unmeasurable, unapproachable absolute, a belief which was repellent to James.

It may puzzle one to discover that James listed among the stable relationships of a pen, linking it with reality, "obeys the guidance of a hand," which is certainly a relationship to the organism, and listed among the fluctuating relationships which link it with ideas, "coming and going with the movements of my eyes," which is likewise a relationship to the organism. What is the difference between the two relationships, that of the pen guided by the hand and that of the pen seen or not seen by the eyes? Certainly in each case the conditions governing the consequences which accrue may be stated in terms of the physical sciences. The laws of optics are no more subjective than the laws of pressure and resistance.

It is the next item in the list which offers the clue to the criterion toward which James should have worked. He spoke of the pen's altering with one's fancy and said that this is one of the possible

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 123-124.

relationships of a percept of a pen. It is, indeed, but the reason for this cleavage between the physical and the psychical James apparently failed to grasp fully. He limited himself to judgments in retrospect concerning "the consequences which always accrue," which is indeed one way, but not the most significant way in which we distinguish between thoughts and things. If, in retrospect, we find that the promise of fulfilment made by any object of experience was indeed "made good,"—if the promise of the pen to mark paper, for instance, was carried out, we continue to call our experience an experience of reality, or we may call it true, but if in retrospect we find that the promise of fulfilment was not "made good" we say that we merely thought it was a pen, but that our idea was erroneous. Now the pragmatist insists that this is only a secondary interpretation of stability and that we do not need to wait for a judgment in retrospect to distinguish between thoughts and realities, since that distinction lies at the very heart of every present experience. Just in so far as the object controlling our behavior is in need of further reconstruction, just in so far as it is yet undetermined, in so far as it lacks stability, in the sense of guiding behavior by a clear forecast of the future, and finally just in so far as these inadequacies are in process of purposive reconstruction, just in so far are we conscious of the object; in other words, the experience as indeterminate is a "thought." James was quite right in connecting stability with objectivity, for real objects are experience as determined, as furnishing a basis for further determination, but he missed the full significance of stability by confusing reality with truth.

Thus James misused the functional test of stability, which became in his hands a means for distinguishing truth from error, but not, as he thought, for making the further distinction between idea and object. If I try to warm myself by putting an imaginary log on my dying fire, consequences of a satisfactory nature do not, it is true, follow, although, as freezing mortals have uniformly testified, there is a fatal dependability and stability about the consequences of this act. There was ambiguity in James's statement of his problem, for what he actually meant was not merely a thought of a log as opposed to a real log in such a case, but an absent log-as-promising-the-same-results, as a present log promises. Then in retrospect he should have seen that whereas one promise is uniformly fulfilled, the other is not, and that a true experience is thus separated from one full of error. Being, we must assume, unaware of this ambiguity in the statement of his problem, James used stability as a test of truth, with the confident assurance that he was using it as a test for the distinction between ideas and objects, which, as we have seen, is a further distinction which may arise from an experience of error, but is not to be identified with it.

The second test by which he proposed to distinguish between a thought and a thing, namely the character of experience as leading, brought him no nearer a satisfactory conclusion because it rested on the same fundamental confusion of the knowledge of the reality of an object with the knowledge of the truth of a judgment. Here, again, had James fully realized the significance of his doctrine of the fringe in respect to "the future within the present" his doctrine of leading might easily have been made consistently pragmatic. But this motivation by the future James dropped out with the result that his doctrine of leading became essentially unintelligible. Yet he worked with the idea so long, so brilliantly and so honestly, that it became the very core of his philosophy and the foundation of his doctrine of truth. It is the key to the proper interpretation of his *Essays in Radical Empiricism* to a large part of *The Pluralistic Universe* and to the two closely allied volumes *Pragmatism* and *The Meaning of Truth*. He stated the position in its simplest terms in speaking of the knowing of perceptual experiences. "One experience would be the knower, the other the reality known; and I could perfectly well define without the notion of 'consciousness' what the knowing actually and practically amounts to—leading towards, namely, and terminating in percepts, through a series of transitional experiences which the world supplies."¹⁶

In pursuance of this conception of consciousness he said that the knower and the known are either (1) "the self-same piece of experience taken twice over in different contexts; or they are (2) two pieces of actual experience belonging to the same subject with definite tracts of conjunctive transitional experience between them or (3) the knower is a possible experience of that subject or of another, to which the said conjunctive transitions would lead, if sufficiently prolonged."¹⁷

It was, as we have seen, by the test of stability of relationships that he sought to determine in the first case whether the self-same piece of experience was to be considered as a thing or as a thought. In the second and third types knowing is considered as a transition, actual or possible, from one piece of actual experience to another. As an example James took the cognitional relation existing between his thought of Memorial Hall while sitting in his library at Cambridge, and Memorial Hall. Again, James's explanation missed the significance of cognition and described verification in its stead. He said: "My mind may have before it only the name, or it may have a clear image, or it may have a very dim image of the hall, but such intrinsic differences in the image make no difference in its cognitive

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

function. Certain extrinsic phenomena, special experience of cognition, are what impart to the image, be it what it may, its knowing office. For instance, if you ask me what hall I mean by my image and I can tell you nothing; or if I fail to lead you towards the Harvard Delta, or if, being led by you, I am uncertain whether the Hall I see be what I had in mind or not; you would rightly deny that I had 'meant' that particular hall at all, even though my mental image might to some degree have resembled it."¹⁸

It is evident that James was here describing, not as he supposed cognition or forward-looking, but verification or backward-looking. He held that fulfilment of meaning is cognition, and not merely verification as he should have held, and then he doubled the failure by advancing no definition of meaning, except as he called it leading or "mental pointing" which had no cognitional value until identified with truth. He said of an idea that, if fulfilled, then "my soul was prophetic and my idea must be and by common consent would be called cognizant of reality."¹⁹ If this statement could be taken as a description of verification only, as was not intended, it is one with the genuinely pragmatic tenet that effective leading is the test of truth.

But James was careful to establish the fact that he was using leading as the functional test of cognition. He said: "In this continuing and corroborating, taken in no transcendental sense, but denoting definitely felt transitions, *lies all that the knowing of a percept by an idea can possibly contain or signify*. Whenever such transitions are felt, the first experience knows the last one. Whenever certain intermediaries are given, such that, as they develop toward their terminus, there is experience from point to point of one direction followed and finally of one process fulfilled, the result is that *their starting point thereby becomes a knower and their terminus an object meant or known*."²⁰

Evidently, as a description of knowing, this again raised the vexed question of objective reference. James did not hold consistently to the truly pragmatic conception of objective reference made intelligible by the presence of the future as a present quality of objects, which we have seen him expressing in his reply to his critic, but instead he held that an idea, or, as he sometimes said, an experience, is the starting point of knowledge, that there are intermediaries in continuous development from point to point, that there is a definite direction of development, and finally a terminus, which is the object meant or known. Now witness the confusion which was caused by

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 55.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

substituting this description of a process of verification or fulfilment of meaning for the description of a process of cognition or expectation of a fulfilment which may or may not come. James said that the transition, the development and the continuing must be taken in no transcendental sense, but simply as denoting definitely felt transitions, relations which "unroll themselves in time." Then, however, he introduced a non-experiential and purely transcendental element by saying that they develop toward a terminus,²¹ a terminus, by definition not yet within experience, yet guiding experience; that the development has a direction—a direction given by the object still outside of experience—and the result is a fulfilment, an end intended from the first but known only when reached. James completed the confusion by saying of the fulfilment, that the starting point *thereby* becomes a knower and the terminus an object meant or known. By completing its promise, a promise, which was not a promise, becomes a promise. And then once more James distinctly said that he was not talking of truth but of cognition for he said that when the object is reached "the percept here not only *verifies* the concept, proves its function of knowing that percept to be true, but the percept's existence as the terminus of the chain of intermediaries *creates* the function. Whatever terminates that chain was, because it now proves itself to be, what the concept 'had in mind.'²²

James was not blind to the dilemma involved in this theory of objective reference and proposed a solution for it which unfortunately takes away the last hope of interpreting the objective reference in truly functional terms. He stated the dilemma thus: "Can the knowledge be there before those elements that constitute its being have come? And if knowledge be not there, how can objective reference occur?"²³ The solution he found in a distinction between knowing as verified and completed and the same knowing in transit. This knowledge in transit, or virtual knowledge, not "completed and nailed down" constitutes, he said, the greater part of our knowing. "*To continue thinking unchallenged is, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, our practical substitute for knowing in the completed sense.* As each experience runs by cognitive transition into the next one, and we nowhere feel a collision with what we elsewhere count as truth or fact, we commit ourselves to the current as if the port were sure."²⁴

The difficulty with the solution for the dilemma is that one cannot discover what James could possibly mean by "virtual knowledge."

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 57 *et seq.*

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 60–61.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 69.

He had insisted that the end known creates the function of knowing. Here he plainly said that ninety-nine times out of a hundred the end does not create the function. However, what does "create the function" in these ninety-nine exceptions to the rule James did not and could not say. At this point, had he been a consistent pragmatist, James would rightly have emphasized the functional nature of the cognitive relation. But he said not a word at this crucial point of this relation of simultaneous stimulus and response between organism and environment, in which the leading is done by the future, which, in the form of a present quality of the environment, shows the consequences of possible action.

This contrast between virtual and completed knowledge played an important part throughout James's system. It is the same idea which appeared in the contrast which he made between conceptual and perceptual knowledge or what he calls more descriptively still, "knowledge about" versus "direct acquaintance." The respective values which James set on these types of knowing is most significant of his failure to be pragmatic. That he could say that "knowledge as direct though 'dumb' acquaintance is superior to knowledge about"²⁵ places him among the dualists who find in sensations a direct revelation, and a miraculous as well, of the independent, external world. He said also: "it is always the speechlessness of sensation, its inability to make any statement, that is held to make the very notion of it meaningless, and to justify the student of knowledge in scouting it out of existence. . . . But in this universal liquidation, this everlasting slip, slip, slip, of direct acquaintance into knowledge about, until at last nothing is left about which the knowledge can be supposed to obtain, does not all significance depart from the situation?"²⁶

Accordingly an interesting difference appears between the attitude which James took toward conceptional and perceptual knowledge and the attitude which the pragmatist takes. Since James had defined knowledge as an affair of leading, the spatial metaphor took its tribute, as metaphors will. Perfect knowledge, accurate and complete, meant closeness of approach to the object, an actual face-to-faceness. This was "direct acquaintance," also perception, also, sometimes, sensation. "Direct knowledge," so described, became static, a mere spectator, and "knowledge about" was no less inherently static, for it meant simply the removal of thought from its object by a series of static mediating acquaintances. This happened because the leading became for James a mechanical conception with no inner spring of purpose. This the pragmatist supplies by in-

²⁵ *The Meaning of Truth*, p. 39.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

interpreting the leading in functional or instrumental terms freed from the spatial metaphor. He says that knowing, whether perceptual or conceptual, means that some part of the organism's environment controls or directs the behavior of the organism in a new way, meaning by new, non-mechanical, since it is a control by the future as an experienced quality of the object.

But leaving aside the pragmatic solution for the time, we find that James's theory of consciousness as leading destroys itself at either of the two possible turnings on its road to reality. James said that "knowledge about" is a stage only on the path to "direct acquaintance" and that the latter corresponds to reality. Correspondence he explained as meaning that "direct knowledge," if valid, will terminate in the reality meant.²⁷ It was a case again of the idea of Memorial Hall leading to Memorial Hall, and again James substituted a test of truth, namely, fulfilment of promise, for a criterion of the presence of knowing, the proper criterion being, as a pragmatist would hold, the future acting in the present. But it was more serious than that, for what becomes of a thought when it reaches reality? Does the thought of Memorial Hall wait outside on the doorstep when it happily "terminates in" Memorial Hall?²⁸ We must reluctantly admit that the "mental pointing" and "effective leading" prove meaningless even for purposes of verification, when stated as James proposed. A thought can not approach a thing; it can not "terminate in" an object. One body can approach another, and a thing, through its meaning, can direct a conscious organism's approach. The church bell summons to prayer, the bugle calls to arms, and a spring day invites to the woods and hills. But James did not so provide for the functioning of the object, and so missed the only possible basis for "the effective relationship" in consciousness.

Some one may well object that it is a misrepresentation of James to ask what becomes of the thought of Memorial Hall when it terminates in the reality, because James had already answered the question in such a way as to avoid representationism. He spoke, as we saw in the beginning, of the point at the intersection of two lines, appearing in one context as a thing and in another as a thought, and by this *identity* of thought and thing, it may be claimed that James had

²⁷ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 17 *et seq.*

²⁸ It is needless to say that for the consistent pragmatist this question does not arise. Insisting as he does that a thought is a certain functioning of the object in relation to the body, he has no superfluous *tertium quid* to dispose of, when a particular function has been performed. He needs to say only, that the object has changed and the body is responding differently. James was trying to establish just such a functional identity of thought and object, but mistook the proper method of proof.

set himself beyond the reach of all criticism to which an unmodified dualism is subject. But this is the point under discussion. James tried in two ways to establish this identity and failed in both. We have seen what became of his test of stability, and we are now in a position to see the dilemma to which his theory of consciousness as ambulatory brought him. For having defined consciousness as a leading toward reality, any stage of the process before the reality was reached might be considered a more or less perfect representation of the object, depending upon proximity, but the absolute termination of the process could bring only unconsciousness, and not consciousness. And so it was that his theory set him, if he had but known, this fruitless choice: direct knowledge was either an unmediated mirroring of reality, and hence representationism and dualism with their attendant enigmas; or else direct knowledge was unconsciousness, for having defined consciousness as leading, what terminated the process would terminate the consciousness and a bystander, the Absolute once more, would be needed to recognize the cognitive quality of this way of knowing.

But James, it must be confessed, would not have welcomed this criticism, for he felt that he had met it and escaped from it once for all by his doctrine of pure experience.²⁹ That this doctrine could not save him from the consequences of dualism, moreover that it further committed him to them, has, I think, become apparent to most students of James, for pure experience is only another name for simple sensations.

To define pure experience he said that "the instant field of the present is always experience in its pure state, plain, unqualified actuality, a simple *that*, as yet undifferentiated into thing and thought and only virtually classifiable as objective fact or as some one's opinion about a fact."³⁰ And then, as we saw, James used the test of stability to break pure experience apart into thoughts and realities. If, however, we try to define pure experience which is not yet thought and not yet objective reality, the sense of bewilderment grows upon us. James called it also the perceptual order and the "immediate flux of life,"³¹ but he elsewhere tells us that it is the

²⁹ For a discussion of this concept cf. Wendell T. Bush, *The Empiricism of James*, this JOURNAL, Vol. X., pp. 534-35, 537.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

³¹ Cf. *ibid.*, p. 93. Here in speaking of pure experience as a feeling of a *that* which is not yet a *what*, and as being therefore the sort of experience which only new born babies or men in semi-coma may have in its purity, we return to the point of view of the *Principles of Psychology* in regard to sensation and are forced to recall the typical experience of the "child new-born in Boston" and the italicized statement that "*Pure sensation can only be realized in the earliest days of life*" (Vol. II., p. 7). In other words James had not progressed as far from his earlier views as he himself thought.

essence of the perceptual order to stand face-to-face with a reality in which it terminates. Therefore pure experience can not be the same as the perceptual order, and it is a confusion to say so, because it contains within itself in undifferentiated state the thought and the reality thought-of, whereas James had made it the essence of the perceptual order to oppose these two.

Moreover pure experience with all its self-sufficiency is in flattest contradiction to the conception of the fringe, wherein the struggle to fill the "aching gap" is all important, for James felt that the stream of pure experience yields content rather than problems and he warned us in regard to our thoughts that: "Only in so far as they lead us, successfully or unsuccessfully, back into sensible experience again, are our abstracts and universals true or false at all."³²

Thus, at this final point, we are forced to conclude that once again James failed to see the proper functional nature of a suggestive conception. Had he been able to identify pure experience with the dynamic conception of the fringe as a *that* which is indeterminate; is in need of reconstruction; is concrete in the sense that it is a concrete problem; and is indeed "the immediate flux of life," out of which of a truth come distinctions between ideas and objects; then James might have escaped dualism.

Regretfully, however, we are forced to admit that James failed to reinterpret dualism as a satisfactory philosophical creed, primarily because he slipped over the real problem of knowing altogether, and dealt with the problem of verification, which he mistook for it. Consequently the pragmatism which he defined is not an adequate explanation for the problem of knowledge, but is, at best, as he himself called it, a new name for traditional ways of thinking. Moreover his failure came because he did not hold closely enough to his own statement that "our present is, while present, directed toward our future."

Yet, notwithstanding this, we must not lose sight of his immeasurable service to philosophy. James's suggestions, with all the brilliancy and charm of their execution, did much to foster the "curious unrest" which he himself noticed in the philosophical atmosphere of the time;³³ to loosen old landmarks, and above all, to stimulate the many students of philosophy who recognized him as a leader to renewed efforts in their "unusually obstinate attempts to think clearly."

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³² *Ibid.*, p. 100.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 39.